

## ASU Wrestling Win SoCon Title

Written by Paul Blascovich  
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Appalachian State University wrestling concluded its regular season with a 39-10 defeat of Davidson at Varsity Gymnasium on Sunday. With the win, the Mountaineers completed a perfect 6-0 Southern Conference slate, finalizing their 2011-12 SoCon Wrestling Championship. The Mountaineers conclude their regular season

at 13-4, marking the team's most wins since 2007-08 (14-7) and fewest losses since 2003-04 (6-4). Having won over 75% of their dual matches, this year's Apps posted the best team winning percentage since going 11-2 in 2002-03, the last season in which the team won the SoCon title.

For Davidson (3-14, 0-6 SoCon), 125-pounder Matt Zarth began the match with a second-period pin to put the Wildcats on the board first, 0-6.

At 133 pounds, junior Brett Boston (Morganton, N.C./Freedom) scored three takedowns in the first period and held a 9-6 advantage entering the third. After taking a 12-6 lead, his Wildcat opponent showed signs of life by notching a reversal, but Boston recovered and tallied a takedown with 11 seconds remaining to earn the 16-8 major decision.

Senior Mike Kessler (Bay City, Mich./Western) struck first at 141 pounds, earning a takedown in the first minute of his bout. He tacked on a nearfall and added seven points in the second period. With the 11-2 lead at the start of the final two minutes, Kessler began his climb to a technical fall but fell two points short with an 18-5 major decision.

With Appalachian in front for the first time, 8-6, Davidson kept up the pressure, taking a 12-3 major decision over ASU's Aaron Scott at 149 pounds to regain an 8-10 lead.

Mountaineer Chip Powell (Greenboro, N.C./S.W. Guilford) took to the mat at 157 pounds and earned his first points in less than 10 seconds into the bout. The senior tacked on three nearfall points before picking up the 1:37 fall, restoring ASU's advantage, 14-10.

No. 15 Kyle Blevins (Sapulpa, Okla./Sapulpa) put on a show at 165 pounds after DC's Tyler Mullen caught hold of Blevins' foot from a standing position and failed to bring the Mountaineer to the mat for nearly a minute. Once free, Blevins proceeded to rack up the points, tallying 10 takedowns and a pair of near-fall points en route to a 23-8 (6:57) technical fall.

At 174 pounds, Carter Downs ( ) jumped out to a 5-1 advantage, picking up a takedown and nearfall in the first period. In the final minute of the bout, the senior secured a final takedown with 24 seconds left and held on for the 11-3 major decision.

ASU's 184-pounder, No. 11 Austin Trotman (Winston-Salem, N.C./Mount Tabor), earned his second forfeit win in two weekends, making his last appearance on his home mat just long enough to earn six points for the Mountaineers.

Freshman Paul Weiss (Ft. Lauderdale, Fla./St. Thomas Aquinas) capped off his rookie season by controlling the first two periods of action, building a 7-1 lead. In the third, Weiss tallied a pair of takedowns and was awarded a three-point nearfall and 15-2 major decision with the final buzzer of Appalachian's regular season.

The match concluded with Appalachian's Joe Cummings (Valley Cottage, N.Y./Nyack) picking up a half-dozen points with a forfeit win at 285 pounds, sealing ASU's 39-10 victory.

With their wins Sunday, Appalachian's three preseason all-SoCon grapplers--Kessler, Blevins and Trotman--fulfilled expectations by completing 6-0 league performances, all but solidifying

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their selections to the all-conference team.

Before Sunday's match, Appalachian's nine graduating seniors were honored for their contributions to the ASU wrestling program.

The Mountaineers now turn their attention to March 3 and the 2012 SoCon Wrestling Tournament. Hosted by Chattanooga, the event will determine which of the league's grapplers will continue on to next month's NCAA Championship in St. Louis.

**Photo Courtesy: John Mark Bentley, ASU Athletics**